

THE AMERICAN TO BE THE PERFECT WORLD TYPE

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WITHIN the course of the next few generations, by the year 2000 possibly, the American will be the intellectual and physical world type. Nature herself has this work in hand. The subject has little or nothing to say about it; the inexorable law of life units has already sentenced the son of Uncle Sam to this exalted pinnacle.

Thomas A. Edison makes this prophecy in no uncertain language. Preachers of American decadence, advocates of the simple life, scientists predicting a plague of insanity, economists crying the fear of caste, all to the contrary, he points out the trail of the American organism to the highest possible state of development.

From the infinitesimal life germ, brought into being thousands of years ago, the famous inventor traces the eminence of the present day American, explains why he and he alone is better able to adapt himself to modern conditions than any other race of men on the globe, and how, by this same process of generic nature, he will fulfill the prophecy.

"The World's Progeny," he terms the most modern of human products, who he says will overcome all dangers to his growth and will not only assume pre-eminence over other races in the world but will enjoy a doubled span of life and quadrupled opportunities for usefulness.

BY CHARLES VIRGIL TEVIS.

It is seldom that the wizard of the electrical age prophesies. He ventures possibilities and probabilities of the future. He says this or that may occur, because a similar this or that has occurred under like conditions. Even in the throes of some inventive accomplishment he has seldom made known the certainty of its wonderful prospect that he himself has felt. But there was nothing equivocal or ambiguous or uncertain in either his tone of voice or his language when he made this declaration to the writer.

"The American will ultimately achieve the intellectual and physical ideal. The race is not decadent; the American species is rapidly becoming a superior organism. Within the next hundred years the balance of life will be extended, the organism of units distinctive to this new world man will more successfully combat environment; he will be pre-eminent."

This conclusion sounded almost radical. In the light of recent utterances. Against the theories of those who glibly quote the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" and those who point us to a neurasthenic end, and those who picture the evils of caste and the money power and the strenuous life, this weighed as a cool challenge. There was no mistaking the issue.

I had asked Mr. Thomas A. Edison to define the American organism, which he had said was different and more advanced than those of other nationalities, and to tell why and what its future is to be. Thereupon he had figuratively taken up the microscope and began a study of the infinitesimal molecule or unit in the human kind that makes for growth. And the master of units had thus found the reason for his prophecy.

Work of the Body Cells.

"The body is an organism made up of unnumbered cells or units, in the brain, the blood, the nerves, in all the organs," he began. "This organism may be likened to New York city. The street sweeper does his appointed work, as do the policeman, the milkman, the Mayor, the street car conductor, the newspaper writers, the clergymen, the merchants, all engaged in legitimate work there. Among these there are organizations for the preservation of order and the keeping of the law. Each kind and grade of workman is a party to this end on his own behalf, is an agent to see that the healthy life of the city is preserved."

"In just the same way work the units of the body. Their characteristics, as differentiated as those of the urban workers, are discernible to a certain extent by the aid of the microscope. Possibly there are germs and cells of life and life functions which we may not examine in this way, but they undoubtedly have the same exercises to perform, and do so in a manner like the known units. Their offices are distinct and separate. As a body and in classes they work toward the preservation of law and order in the human city."

"It is always a fight between these units and environment. We cannot control them, although we may think we can. They act independently of our wills, on a schedule immutably set by nature. You cut your finger, for instance. Immediately those units directly affected begin a defence and a reconstruction of the injured parts, even as would the firemen and the builders in New York when a conflagration occurs. Let the microbes of some disease get into the system and the units begin a fight against them, even as do the authorities in New York when crime becomes rampant. The units are sometimes slow of defence, but they are always on the defensive. I might say that they lie awake nights making plans to this end."

At War with Their Condition.

"Until they become inured to environment the human units are ever at war with their condition. Put a man who has been accustomed to hot weather in a cold zone, and until his body units become accustomed to the change—we say he has become acclimated—he will suffer. But the units will finally accept the change. Put a man who has laced his way along in a position which requires hard work and his units will likewise rebel and in the end likewise accept the altered condition. Depending on environment, the human body can become accustomed to almost anything. Why, you can begin with a tiny pinch of poison and gradually increase the dose every day, and in a month be able to take enough to kill two elephants and still live."



PROPHECY by Thomas A. Edison. Who Explains Why the American Organism of Life Units Far Surpasses That of Any Other Nationality



Thomas A. Edison.

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"The germ of generation never dies. We have units in us, all of us, which are perhaps thousands of years old. That is why we often are able to do things which we never dreamed we could do; we can undergo changes and hardships that we thought were impossible. It may be the units in us of an ancestor who lived several hundred years ago which make this possible. Think of the extent of hereditary influence in this connection!"

"Now, these human units, or cells, look the same in many races of people, but they are different. The microscope cannot show this. It is seen in the habits, manners and customs of the people, based, primarily, on their environment. The Spaniard, we say, is different from the Scandinavian, the German from the Englishman, the French from the Irish, the Russian from the Italian, and so on. Why? A matter of body units working in sympathy with a particular environment and rigorously set, almost, in this groove by reason of centuries of similar ancestral units. A leopard cannot change his spots, but, after several generations of cross breeding with, say, some domestic or herbivorous animal, he will thrive on roots and grass, although he may still relish meat."

"Take, for example, a settlement of a dozen blacksmiths. Let them marry and raise children, and their boys become blacksmiths and intermarry among their daughters, and their children do the same. You will always have a pretty good race of blacksmiths, but that is all you will have. However, change the personnel of the dozen. Take a doctor, a blacksmith, a preacher, a merchant and distribute the other places among other trades and professions and let their children intermarry and also their children and their children's children, and you will have a superior product. The ultimate offspring, a composite of units suitable to many environments, will not only be capable of being a good blacksmith but a good preacher, or doctor, or merchant, &c. He will be of a much higher intelligence and equally as capable physically as the lineal descendant of the dozen blacksmiths."

"Take your physician from Spain, with generations of units in his body used to his native environment; a merchant from Germany, a preacher from England and the others from other lands and put them in your colony. Your ultimate progeny will be an organism that will successfully combat almost any environment. Why, we are having experiments prove

this to us every day, in the vegetable and animal kingdoms especially."

I suggested the work of Burbank, the floral magician. Mr. Edison nodded.

"Certainly," he declared. "He is illustrating this truth in a brilliant manner. Here he plants a hardy flower which has little perfume, there a delicate plant of a delightful odor. The pollen of the two mix, or he grafts one to the other. What is the result? A hardy flower with a delightful perfume. The new bloom has characteristics of both plants, in its roots and fibres it contains units of both."

"This example and what I have said answers your question. What is the American organism? and also explains why it is in an advanced stage compared to those of other nationalities. The American, we may say, is the progeny of the dozen men of different characters from different climes. He is a more perfect machine than the scion of the blacksmiths. He contains an almost unlimited wealth of life units; there is, in reason, hardly a conceivable end to his limitations. That is why he excels, and will con-

tinue to, for he is more fully equipped with nature's tools than is any other nationality on the globe."

"I am a mixture of different characteristics, of units. So are you. So are nine-tenths of the population of the United States. The Jewish people are one great exception. But consider one of their classes, that of the very poor, who live in the city slums. They and their fathers have lived such a life for so long and their units have become so inured to it that they are practically immune from the ordinary slum diseases. Put them out on a farm, with pure air and pure food, and they would become ill. This is not a theory; it is a strong example in support of my contention."

Americans Crave Excitement.

"One striking evidence of the mixed units in the American of to-day is his restlessness, his advocacy of the strenuous life. We must be moving, bettering, reconstructing, achieving. We build great buildings and then tear them down to build bigger ones. We crave change always. Nothing is good enough. As the only standard of success in America is the accumulation of money, we go at making it with tremendous energy, and we work just as hard in keeping it and spending it. The American does not care for money itself; he throws it away when he gets it; he needs must have the excitement of acquiring it. He forgets the success of one triumph in the press of working for another. This twentieth century progeny of the world cannot then help from being a leader in all avenues of endeavor to which he turns his attention."

"Medical men say that the strenuous life is a short one, with an ugly end," I suggested.

"Not necessarily," The inventor spoke with emphasis. "It is a natural, logical result of our ancestry. And our units will balance our strenuous environment, undoubtedly. We have to use a little sense, of course. Some animals' cells so successfully combat environment that they live to be hundreds of years old. There is no reason why the human species should not lengthen the average span of life to two hundred years, at least. It is a question of balance. Our units already combat environment to a balance at, say, one hundred years. When we reach this stage we die. But there is no reason why the balance wheel should not move to the two hundred mark; and it will. The forces of nature within us, science and our bettered manner of living are all working to this end. And the intermingling of the American units of to-day and to-morrow will be the greatest factor in this."

"Within the last fifty years we have begun to see the effects of the early settlement of our country and the intermingling and intermarriage of different races. Look at the achievements of Americans in all walks of life. As I have said, the accumulation of money is the real standard of success here, so compare the number of successful Americans with the successful men of other countries. How long ago was it that the farmer was content to till his acres in the way his great-great-grandfather did? He is beginning to be a different sort now. Why, even in New England they are becoming a mixed people. Indeed they are, and watch what that will mean for those States."

No Caste in America.

"What about those countries and peoples which do not encourage immigration, where the boast is of a pure strain of heredity?" I asked.

"The same result that obtained in the colony of blacksmiths," Mr. Edison replied. "The American is bound to be superior. I do not mean that there should be indiscriminate mixture of units, nor has there been, except in few cases. The bad elements of every race seek their level. And we have already begun legislation, such as that regarding criminals in Indiana, which is going to minimize this evil. I mean, of course, the decent elements, not necessarily the highest classes intellectually or physically, but the good, substantial classes of hatered nationality. The useful units of one are sure to make for the betterment, the completeness of the whole organism."

"I understand that a chair of eugenics has been established in one of the Eastern schools, and I think this a wise move. The people should know more on that subject. Society must certainly protect itself. Science is doing much to this end."

"You ask about other countries. Let me tell you what is really the matter. Caste—that's it. So long as it exists there will be weaknesses at the human base; nature will be handicapped and the future of the country supporting such an institution will be precarious."

"There are those who claim that the caste spirit is becoming strong in America." The inventor smiled broadly at this remark.

"No," he said, again serious. "Go down to the ferries and the bridges running into Manhattan any morning and watch the people coming to work, each man with a newspaper. Watch them again in the evening, and you will see each man with a newspaper. That's the reason why there will never be caste in the United States. So long as there are newspapers and schoolhouses such a calamity can never occur."

"What you might call caste here, certain money powers and certain society sets, is nothing of the sort. It is un-American in every sense and has no real influence whatever. It is not worth the attention of the real American of to-day. He hasn't time for its consideration. Even in spite of himself, perhaps, he is too busy doing what his modern lot calls upon him to do, exercising and developing those multi-units within him which make him what he is and what he is going to be."

"And that?" I questioned.

Mr. Edison's features assumed a set expression, which is characteristic of him whenever he states the Q. E. D. of some intricate problem. Then he made the statement I have already quoted, the prophecy as to the pre-eminent future of the American man.